

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 02085 071452Z

41

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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P R 071219Z APR 76
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7132
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2085

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SY, UK
SUBJECT: BRITISH PROTEST SYRIAN FIRING ON UK FREIGHTER

REFS DAO DAMASCUS IR 6891 0174 76

1. UK AMBASSADOR ROBERTS UNDER INSTRUCTIONS TO MAKE "STRONG PROTEST" ABOUT SYRIAN ATTACK ON SMALL (1,500 TONS) BRITISH FREIGHTER IN LEBANESE TERRITORIAL WATERS APRIL 6. ROBERTS

WAS UNDERSTANDABLY LIVID OVER FACT NEWS OF UK PROTEST HAD BEEN LEAKED BY FONOFF AND BROADCAST EARLY MORNING ISRAELI NEWS BEFORE HIS INSTRUCTIONS FROM LONDON HAD EVEN BEEN

RECEIVED.

2. ROBERTS SAID THAT HE ASSUMED YOUNG, OVEREAGER SYRIAN PATROL BOAT CAPTAIN HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR INCIDENT.

SHIP IN QUESTION WAS BULK CARRIER OF "TERASS" USED IN MANUFACTURE OF SPECIALLY STRONG CEMENTS. IRONY WAS THAT SHIP HAD BEEN INTERCEPTED DAY PREVIOUS AFTER DEPARTING CYPRIOT PORT AND HAULED INTO SYRIAN PORT OF TARTOUS FOR INSPECTION. IT HAD BEEN RELEASED BY SYRIANS AFTER
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BRITISH EMBASSY INQUIRED REASONS FOR ITS DETENTION, BUT

ONLY AFTER SYRIANS HAD HAD FULL 24-HOURS TO INSPECT
CARGO. IT WAS ATTACKED BY SYRIAN NAVY FOLLOWING DAY AS
IT APPROACHED LEBANESE PORT OF TRIPOLI. FORTUNATELY, NO

PERSONNEL INJURED.

3. WE RECALL STORY FROM OCTOBER WAR, WHICH WE USED TO THINK
APOCRYPHAL, THAT WHEN SYRIAN DESTROYER SERIOUSLY
DAMAGED BY ISRAELIS WAS RETURNING TO HOME PORT OF LATTAKIA,
IT WAS SUNK BY SYRIAN SHORE BATTERIES WHICH HAD "POSITIVELY
IDENTIFIED" IT AS ISRAELI WAR SHIP.
MURPHY

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
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Concepts: SHIP DETENTION, DIPLOMATIC PROTESTS, CARGO SHIPS
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Draft Date: 07 APR 1976
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Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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